

Graduated Driver License Iowa's Experience Since the Law's Inception

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Introduction

On January 1, 1999, Iowa's Graduated Driver License (GDL) law took effect creating a three tier licensing system for young drivers. Possibly the most significant change brought about by the passage of GDL law in Iowa, was the creation of a middle tier, an "intermediate driver license," for young drivers in their first year of driving without the requirement of adult supervision. Previously, young drivers went from their instruction permit, which required these drivers to have adult supervision whenever they drove, to a full privilege driver license after successfully completing driver education and turning age sixteen. Now young drivers get an intermediate license, which carries some restrictions on driving privileges, and accelerated driver improvement interventions, which are intended to help these drivers make the transition to unsupervised driving more safely. This new intermediate license is held, primarily, for the period between the sixteenth and the seventeenth birthdays.

Iowa's Graduated Driver License law adapted many of the recommendations of "Model GDL Laws" championed by the public agencies such as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and private safety organizations such as the National Association of Independent Insurers. Since the Iowa law modified some elements of the "model laws" that were adopted more fully by some other states, Iowa crash and conviction statistics will differ from both those states that adopted more of the "model laws" and those states that have adopted less.

This study was begun in the summer of 2000 to determine the effect of Iowa's GDL licensing requirements on the crash and conviction experience of new sixteen-year-old drivers. The crash and conviction experience of the last group of sixteen-year-old drivers who obtained a pre-GDL drivers license in 1998 was compared to the crash and conviction experience of the first group of sixteen-year-olds to obtain the new, intermediate license under the provisions of GDL in 1999. Each succeeding year, a new year's worth of data has been added to the study representing a new group of sixteen-year olds who have obtained their first (intermediate) license under the Iowa GDL law.

In 2001, the first group of sixteen-year-olds who obtained their original instruction permits under the GDL law obtained their intermediate license. This longitudinal study may show whether the additional requirements placed on permit holders, under GDL, affected their driving behavior when they started driving on their own after receiving their intermediate license.

Traffic Crash and Moving Violation Conviction Data

In 1999, the first year of Iowa's new Graduated Driver License law (GDL), sixteen-year-old drivers, the first to be holders of the new intermediate licenses, 20% fewer drivers had moving violation traffic convictions (the kind of violations that can get your license suspended) than did sixteen-year-old drivers in 1998, the last year before the GDL law took effect. In the same year, traffic crashes for sixteen-year-old intermediate drivers decreased about 10% from the number of crashes in which sixteen year old drivers were involved in 1998.

In the second year of the graduated licensing law, 27% fewer sixteen-year-old drivers received moving violation traffic citations than in 1999. During that same year, drivers with traffic crashes for sixteen-year-old intermediate license holders decreased about 10% from the number of sixteen year old drivers with crashes in 1999. For the two years that the GDL law has been in effect in Iowa, sixteen year old drivers with moving violation traffic convictions have decreased a total of 42% and sixteen year old drivers with traffic crashes have decreased approximately 19%.

In the third year of the graduated licensing law (2001), the experience of the sixteen-year-old drivers was different from previous sixteen-year-olds. This was the first group of sixteen-year-old drivers who received both their permits and their intermediate license under the provisions of the GDL law. These drivers had to adhere to the provisions of the GDL instruction permit as well as the GDL intermediate license. In 2001, 738 fewer sixteen-year-old drivers received traffic citations than in the previous year (2000). Even though this was only a slight decrease in the number of drivers with citations over the previous year, it was still 6,511 drivers with citations fewer than were received in the year before the GDL law took effect. This is 47.5% lower than in 1998 (the last pre-law year). Drivers with traffic crashes in the third year of the GDL law continued to decrease, but at a reduced rate. There were 304 fewer drivers with crashes in 2001 than there were in 2000. This was a 6.0% decrease in sixteen year old drivers with traffic crashes. The 4,736 drivers with crashes in 2001 represented a nearly 24% reduction for 16 year-old drivers compared to the 6,206 drivers with crashes in the last year before the GDL law took effect.

In 2002, the fourth year of Iowa's GDL law, 16 year old drivers with moving traffic convictions increased for the first time. The number of sixteen-year-old drivers with moving traffic convictions increased by 37 in 2002 compared the number in 2001. That is a 0.5% increase over the previous year. This number is still 6,474 fewer sixteen year old drivers with moving traffic violation convictions than in the last year prior to the Graduated Driver Licensing law taking effect (1998). This is still a 47.2% decrease in the number of drivers with moving violation convictions since the law took effect. Traffic crashes, on the other hand, have continued to decrease since the GDL law took effect.

In 2002, sixteen-year-old drivers had 4,508 traffic crashes. This is a 27.4% decrease from the 6,206 sixteen-year old drivers with traffic crashes in 1998, the last year before the GDL law took effect. This was the fourth year in a row that traffic crashes declined.

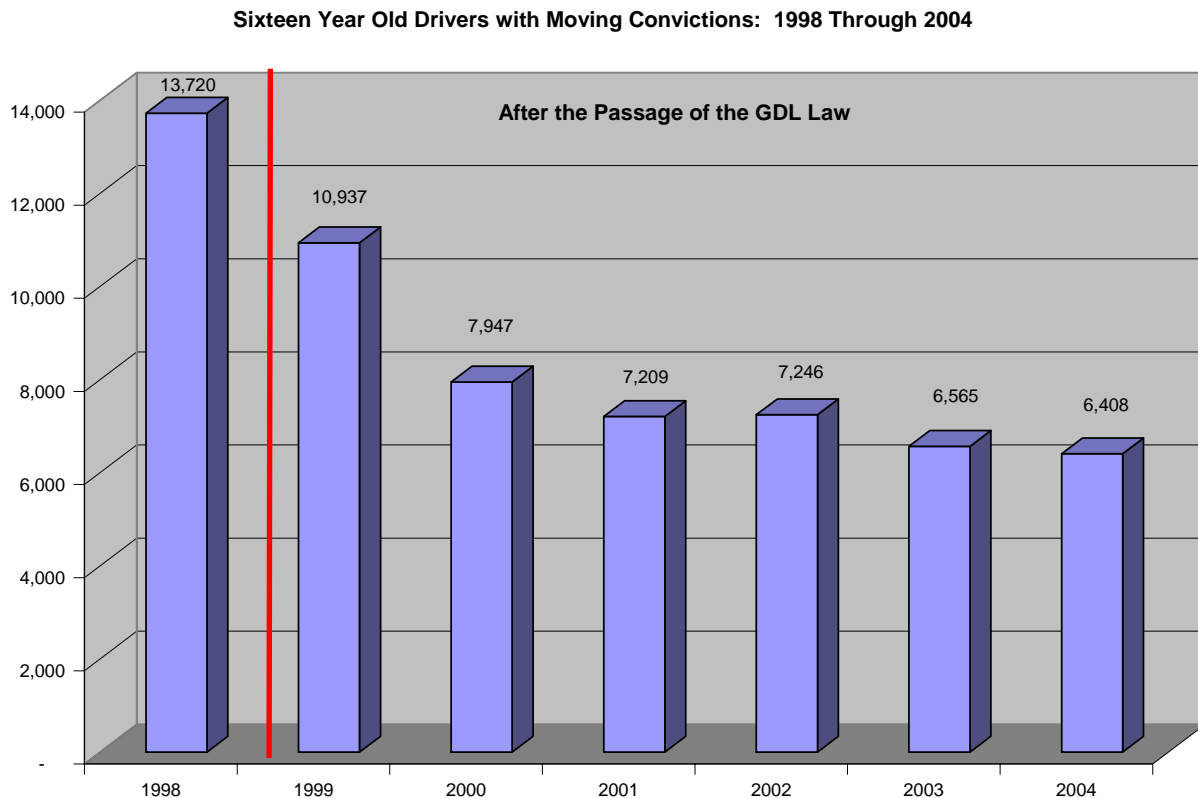
In 2003, the fifth year of Iowa's GDL law, sixteen-year-old drivers receiving traffic convictions decreased again after increasing in 2002. There were 681 fewer sixteen-year-old drivers who received moving traffic convictions. There were 4,000 sixteen-year-old drivers were involved in traffic crashes in 2003. This was 508 fewer drivers than in 2002 and 2,206 drivers than in 1998 the last year before the GDL law took effect.

In 2004, the sixth year of Iowa's GDL law, 6,408 moving violation traffic convictions received by sixteen-year-old drivers. That is 157 convictions fewer than in 2003. In 2004, 3,904 drivers had traffic crashes. This was 94 fewer drivers than in 2003. This is the sixth year in a row that fewer sixteen year old drivers had traffic crashes.

Year-by-Year Traffic Conviction Data

16 year old drivers with traffic convictions; 1998	13,720
16 year old drivers with traffic convictions; 1999	10,937
16 year old drivers with traffic convictions; 2000	7,947
16 year old drivers with traffic convictions; 2001	7,209
16 year old drivers with traffic convictions; 2002	7,246
16 year old drivers with traffic convictions; 2003	6,565
16 year old drivers with traffic convictions; 2004	6,408

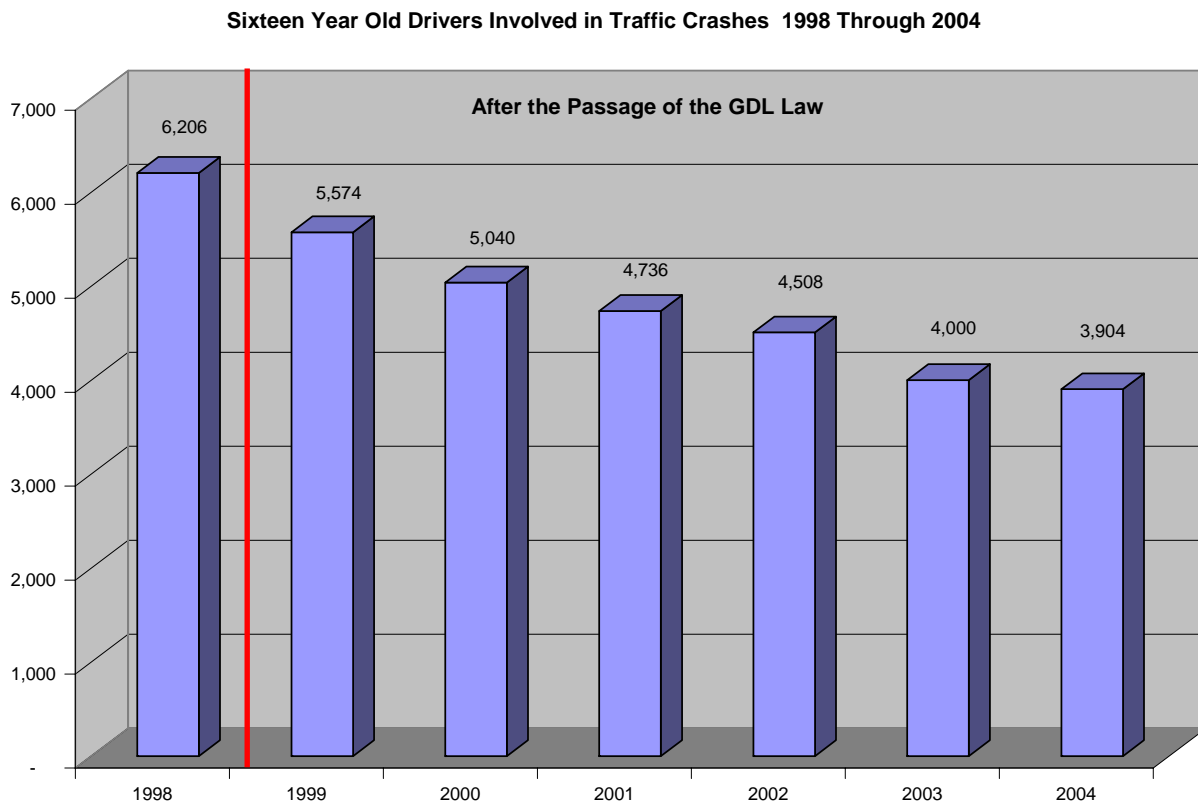
The traffic conviction data presented in a bar chart would look like this:



Year-By-Year Traffic Crash Data

16 year old drivers involved in traffic crashes; 1998	6,206
16 year old drivers involved in traffic crashes; 1999	5,574
16 year old drivers involved in traffic crashes; 2000	5,040
16 year old drivers involved in traffic crashes; 2001	4,736
16 year old drivers involved in traffic crashes; 2002	4,508
16 year old drivers involved in traffic crashes; 2003	4,000
16 year old drivers involved in traffic crashes; 2004	3,904

The crash data presented in a bar chart would look like this:



Remedial Driver Improvement Actions

Intermediate drivers who are convicted of a moving violation on their intermediate license or were involved in a motor vehicle crash, to which they contributed, are being called in for an Remedial Driver Interview. Following the interview they will have their one-year intermediate status extended plus they may have new restrictions added to their license, have their license downgraded to their previous license type or have their license suspended.

In the first year of the GDL law (1999), 7,303 interviews were held, 50 drivers received added license restrictions or had license downgraded, 355 had their license suspended for not attending interview, and 459 drivers had their license suspended for the nature of their driving behavior or receiving a second traffic conviction.

In the second year (2000), 16,987 interviews were held. 222 drivers have had restrictions added to their license; 96 drivers had their license downgraded to the previous license type held (usually an Instruction Permit), 437 had their license suspended for failing to appear for the interview and 3,082 had their license suspended due to driving behavior or for receiving a second traffic conviction.

In the third year of the GDL (2001), 20,064 interviews were held. 144 drivers had further restrictions added to their license. 97 drivers had their licenses downgraded. There were 353 drivers suspended for failing to appear for their interview. Another 3,782 drivers had their license suspended for negative driving behavior or receiving a second moving traffic citation.

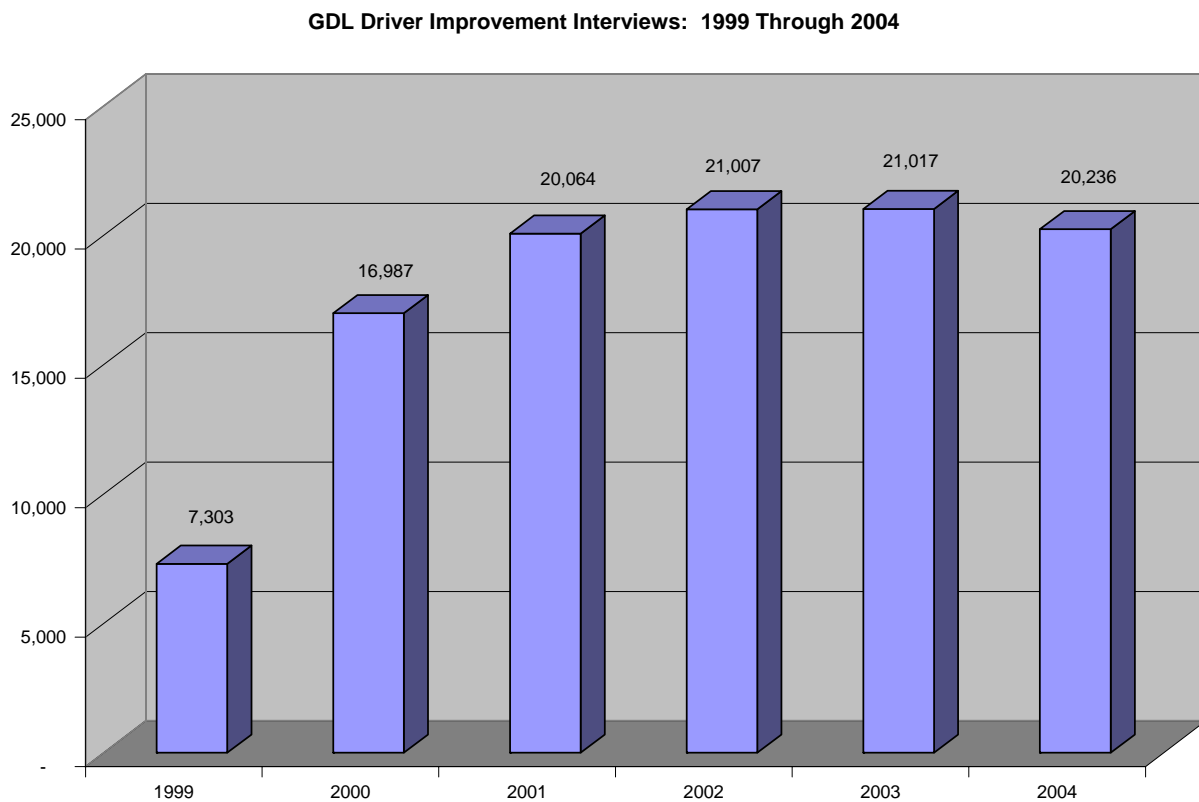
In the fourth year (2002), there were 21,007 interviews held. 202 drivers received additional restrictions; that is slightly above the three-year average (2000-2002) of 189. Eighty-two drivers had their licenses downgraded; that is lower than the three-year average of ninety-two licenses downgraded per year. 355 drivers had their license suspended for failing to appear for their interview; this number is the same as it was in the first year, but with the increase in the number of interviews held, the percentage of licenses suspended due to failure-to appear for the interview has decreased from 5% to 2% over the years. 4,214 drivers had their license suspended for driving behavior or receiving a second traffic conviction.

In the fifth year (2003), there were 21,017 interviews held. 195 drivers received additional restrictions, down slightly from 2002. There were 101 drivers who had their license downgraded from the previous status, slightly higher than the three-year average of ninety-two downgrades per year. There were 361 drivers who had their licenses suspended for failing to appear. Almost 4,300 drivers had their license suspended for driving behavior or for receiving a second moving conviction. This was the slowest year of growth in driving suspensions since GDL took effect.

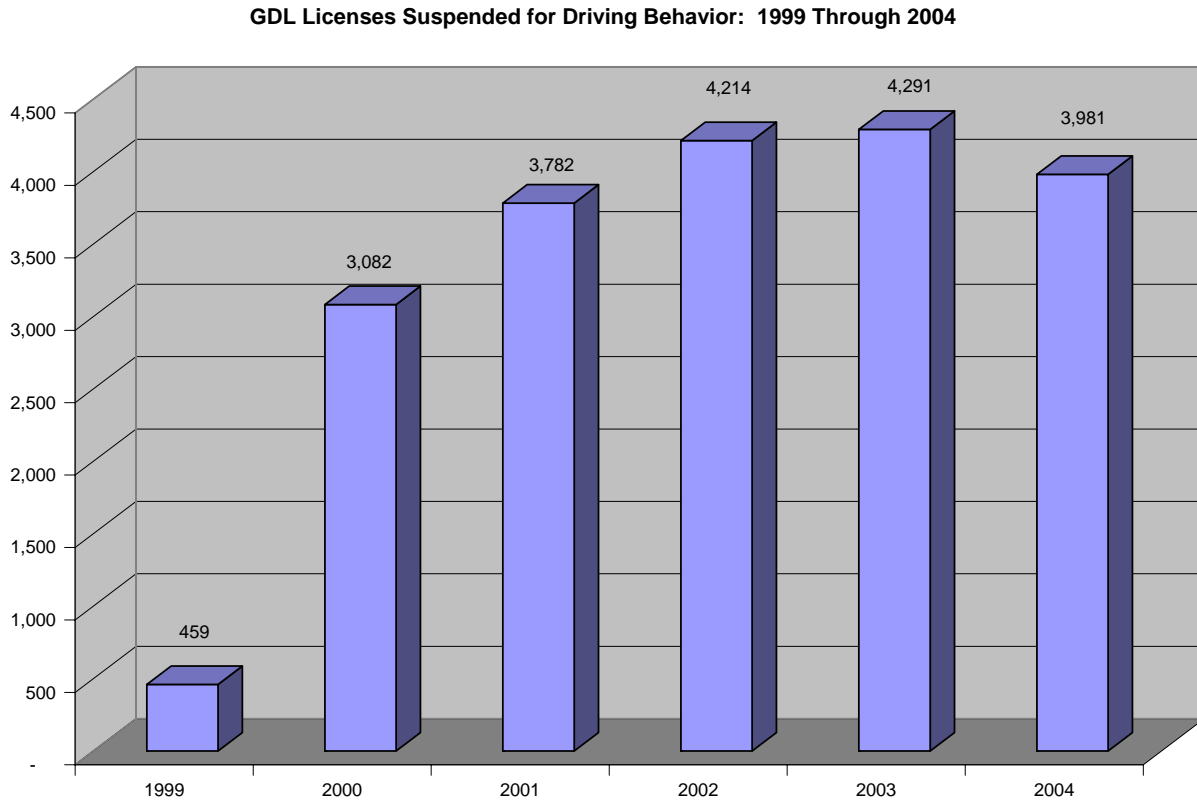
In the sixth year (2004), there were 20,236 interviews held. 398 drivers received additional restrictions more than double the number in 2003 and 78 drivers had their license downgraded. There were 335 drivers suspended for not appearing for the interview. There were also 3,981 drivers who had their license suspended for driving behavior that was deemed serious enough to suspend, receiving a second moving violation conviction, or refusing to positively participate in the interview.

Year	Interviews Held	Safety Advisory	New Restrictions/ Downgrade	Licenses Suspended Failed-to-Appear	Licenses Suspended Driving Behavior
1999	7,303	6,439	50	355 (5%)	459
2000	17,802	13,848	222	432 (3%)	3,175
2001	20,064	15,688	144	353 (2%)	3,782
2002	17,817	13,937	202	312 (2%)	3,282
2003	21,017	16,069	195	361 (2%)	4,291
2004	20,236	15,222	398	335 (2%)	3,981

The interview data and license suspension data are both presented in separate bar charts on this page. The interview data presented in a bar chart format would look like this:



The license suspension data presented in a bar chart would look like this:



All drivers required to attend a GDL driver improvement interview will begin a new twelve-month probationary period in order to fulfill their intermediate license requirements either at the end of the interview or following the completion of their suspension.

It should be noted that one sign that the new law is having some impact on the behavior of Sixteen-year-old drivers is that even though the total number interviews held in 2000 doubled the number held in 1999, the number of drivers suspended for failing to appear for the interview increased by less than 100. Then in the years 2002 and 2003, the number of drivers suspended for failing to appear held close to the same number that were suspended in the first year of the GDL law when only 7,000 interviews were held even though the number of interviews had risen to the 21,000 level by 2002 and 2003. That number of suspensions for Failed-to Appear has also stabilized in the 310-360 range. This means that the percentage of drivers who failed to appear for their interview has decreased from 4.9% in the first year to 1.7% in 2004. It appears that these young drivers are beginning to take the interview process seriously.

Anticipated Future Study

The Iowa Department of Transportation has commissioned a more in-depth study to be released completed in the summer of 2006. This study will include more data including permit holders (fourteen year olds and fifteen year olds) and seventeen year old drivers. It will also include a control group of older, adult drivers. This study is also expected to include crash data for several years prior to the Graduated Driver License law taking effect in January 1, 1999.